

(WASHINGTON, DC) - Assistant Senate Majority Leader Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Representative Halvorson today asked the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Craig Fugate, for help with the relocation of Central School in Ottawa, Illinois.

"For over a decade, the City of Ottawa has been a model for flood mitigation programs that both the state and FEMA recommend," said Durbin. "Despite the city's efforts, the Central School, located in a recognized flood plain, has been hit hard by three different floods over the past year. Building a new school away from the floodplain is the only permanent solution. Representative Halvorson and I have asked FEMA to work with Ottawa to establish a school that will give nearly 400 students the stability they need to excel in their studies."

"Senator Durbin and I are committed to make sure that the children that are enrolled at Central School can get back into a safe, permanent campus as soon as possible. We're going to make sure FEMA leadership understands exactly what the situation is here and how critical this is to our community," said Halvorson.

[Text of letter below]

May 21, 2009

U.S. Department of Homeland Security - FEMA
500 C Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

We write to ask for your help relocating Central School of Elementary School District No. 141 in Ottawa, Illinois.

At least three major flood events have impacted Central School in the past year, including historic levels of flooding in September 2008. The school district and the community have determined that re-building the school in the same location on the floodplain no longer makes sense.

FEMA recently approved temporary relocation funds to another facility based on extenuating circumstances. The community has taken the steps necessary to mitigate loss and has done a commendable job, working with your agency, of accommodating the 400 displaced students.

We appreciate FEMA's assistance to date and respectfully request that you make the necessary arrangements to work with Ottawa so the schoolchildren can return to a stable structure, outside of the floodplain. We thank you in advance for your timely consideration of this urgent request and stand ready to assist in any way appropriate.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Deborah L. Halvorson
United States Representative